

# EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN HOMILETIC MAGAZINE.

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VOL. I.

NOVEMBER, 1903.

No. 11.

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## Sermon on Matt. 10, 32. 33.

It is a most remarkable passage which is found Rom. 10, 10. There the holy Apostle Paul writes: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." We are here told that both faith in Christ and confession of the name of Christ are necessary for salvation, and seemingly the two things are placed on a level. I say seemingly, for in fact they are not. Paul does not mean to say that salvation must be partly obtained by faith and partly by confession. Righteousness and salvation are ours solely by faith in Christ. For, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thine house.*" What the apostle does mean to say, however, is this, that salvation, when it has become ours by faith, can be lost again by failure to confess our faith, that faith and confession must always and necessarily go together, that the former cannot exist without being followed by the latter, so that from the absence of confession it can always be inferred that a man has no true faith and, therefore, cannot be saved.

It is for this reason that Paul places faith first: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." By faith in Christ, and by it alone, we become partakers of that righteousness which Christ wrought for us in His vicarious fulfillment of the Law and in His innocent suffering and death. If we will but accept what He has done for us, only trust in this with our whole heart, only rest all our hope for heaven on this, then we are truly and entirely saved.

But let us note here that the apostle says: "*With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.*" It is not the dead belief of the head and mouth by which this righteousness is obtained. A man may accept as true, with his reason, the Gospel of Christ, he may even confess it with his mouth; yet, if his heart is not warmed by the

love of Christ, if he does not place his heart's confidence in Christ's merit, then his belief is nothing but a dead and useless thing, which brings him no benefits, nay, rather, which only serves to increase his responsibility and in the end will add to his damnation. Beware, then, my hearers, of this dead faith of the head and mouth. Confessing Christ without truly believing in Him will never save you. First you must believe in Christ with all your heart—only then can you also make confession with your mouth unto salvation.

But where the former is the case, where the true faith of the heart exists, there the latter, the confession of the mouth, must and will always follow. You cannot be a Christian without confessing Christ. This important truth the Master Himself points out in the text under consideration. And since our old man dislikes to confess Christ, and we are therefore in sore need of being encouraged in the performance of this duty, let me now speak to you of

### CONFESSING CHRIST BEFORE MEN.

I shall point out,

- I. *How we should confess Christ, and*
- II. *Why we should confess Him.*

#### I.

How should we confess Christ, in the first place? There are two ways, chiefly, in which we can do this, viz., by our life or actions, and by our words. It is by these things that we show our character before men, by which we are judged of them, and it is therefore also by these that we can show men that we are Christians, by which we can confess the name of Christ before men.

So we can confess Him, in the first place, in our lives and by our deeds. In fact, our whole life should be one great, uninterrupted testimony for Christ and for our religion. We should adorn the Gospel of Christ by a holy life. We should enable men to point at us and say: That man is a Christian, a follower of Christ. His whole life and career stamp him as such. Ah, friends, a truly Christian, a truly Christlike life is the most powerful testimony that we can possibly bear for the name of Jesus. The world looks for this testimony, it expects the Christians to lead a life in accordance with their profession and their faith. Woe to that Christian who fails thus to bear testimony for Christ, to confess Him by a godly life! "Woe to that man by whom offense cometh!" Failure thus to confess Christ, failure on the part of Christians to shun everything that may bring reproach upon the name and religion of Christ, is sure to give offense, to strengthen unbelievers in their unbelief and wicked-



ness and to lead them the more surely into eternal destruction. Yes, woe to that Christian who fails to confess Christ by his life!

What, then, must we do thus to confess Christ before men? Let me specialize a little. We must confess Him, in the first place, by publicly professing ourselves His disciples. We must not be ashamed to assume His name, to be called "Christians." In other words, we must become members of His Church. And to become a member of the Church means to join a particular church and a particular congregation. You find people occasionally who claim to be Christians, but who hold no membership in any special church or congregation, who worship here and there and everywhere. Perhaps they refuse to join any particular congregation, because they do not want to help bear the burdens and share the responsibilities that membership involves; perhaps, too, they are too stingy to contribute towards the expenses, or too much given to pleasure-seeking to renounce the world and all its ways and all its pomp. Theater-going, dancing, lodges, liquor, lewdness, etc., keeps them from joining the church, from confessing the name of Christ before men by their life. God pity them, for fearful will be their reward in the world to come!—Nor must we imagine that it makes no difference *what* church we join, as long as it is one of the "Christian" churches that profess to believe in Christ as the Savior of mankind. It is our duty to look for, and to become a member of, that church which believes and teaches the full and pure Gospel truth, as Christ Himself revealed it to us. All churches that vitiate and adulterate that truth by false, unscriptural teachings deny the name of Christ to the extent of their false teachings, and by becoming or remaining a member of such church you, too, would become guilty of such denial.

But merely joining the church is not enough, in order to confess the name of Christ in our lives. Becoming a member of a church may be nothing more than a perfunctory act. Merchants, lawyers, physicians, and others, sometimes join the church because it will help to build up their trade and practice. Others, again, do so because all their friends and relatives are church members, and they wish to please them and to retain their good will. Such people only bring shame upon Christ, and condemnation upon themselves. The world is sure to find it out, sooner or later, whether we have joined the Church for such an external reason, or whether church membership is really a matter of conviction with us. And so, instead of being a confession, it will, rather, become a denial, a desecration of Christ's holy name! Nay, we must show people that we belong to the church in earnest, that our heart is with Christ! How can we do that? Well, for one thing, we must be faithful and dili-

gent in our attendance at divine services and in our use of God's means of grace. Did it ever strike you that your attendance at church is an act of confession? Churchgoing is of course, primarily, an act of worship, but it is just as truly also an act of confession. If your ungodly neighbor sees you go to church Sunday after Sunday, if he sees how faithful and diligent you are in worshipping your Lord and Master, don't you think that this will make an impression upon him? Don't you think that it will cause him to wonder once in a while, whether, after all, there is not perhaps something in Christianity, if it has the power thus to draw a follower of Jesus to church Sunday after Sunday, from one year to another? But if you are sluggish and irregular in your church attendance, if you fail to commune, perhaps for years at a time, if you neglect to have your children baptized until they are nearly grown: don't you think that infidel neighbor of yours will get the idea that there must be precious little in the Christian religion, if people who profess this religion are so cold and indifferent in their use of its privileges? Again I say: Woe unto you!—And one thing more must be said right here: When you come to church, confess Christ by taking part in the worship! Do not come here to gossip with your neighbor, don't come to show your fine clothes, don't whisper in church before and during the service, don't look about during the sermon or go to sleep; but pray when you come in and go out, help in the singing, take part in the responsive readings, be an attentive listener! You do not know if by your behavior in church you may not render a powerful testimony for Christ and the power of His Gospel. Perhaps there is an unconverted man who has strayed into the church and is watching you. Perhaps, by your behavior you are either influencing him to come to Jesus or driving him deeper into doubt and unbelief. Beware, beware, lest by your behavior in church you deny Christ.

And, finally, you must, of course, also confess Christ by your life outside of the house of worship. What good will it do, if you are a church member, if you go to church every Sunday, etc., but if by your daily life at your home, in your business and calling you destroy the impression for good which the former created? What will that ungodly neighbor think of your religion, if during the week he sees you drunk, or finds you dishonest in your dealings, or hears you use profane language or abuse your wife and children? Don't you think that he will be inclined to say to himself: If that is what Christianity makes out of a man, then it is certainly nothing but an empty sham, then I, for one, will have none of it? Don't you see how by such a life you would deny your Lord and Savior before



men? Ah, beware, beware! Woe unto that man by whom offense cometh!

But it is not only in our lives that we are to confess Christ: we must also do so with our mouth. There are, of course, special places and occasions where public testimony is borne to the name of Christ. Whenever your pastor stands here in this pulpit and proclaims the Gospel of Christ, then he is bearing testimony for Christ as your mouthpiece, then you are, through him, confessing Christ before men. That public testimony to the name of Christ is a continual warning to unbelievers, and if they fail to listen to it, it will plead against them on the day of judgment. Again, when you bring your infants here to Baptism and their sponsors renounce the devil in their name; when, later in life, your children stand up here at the altar in the solemn rite of Confirmation and promise to be God's forever; when during the Sunday services you all stand up and confess your faith by reciting the Creed: all these are special acts of public confession for Christ.

But we Christians must not content ourselves with these public confessions, we must also bear testimony individually and privately. Let us remember, in the first place, that it is our duty to confess Christ's name before the world. The unbelieving world, you know, is indifferent toward religion, and frequently ridicules and scoffs at the Christians for their "foolish superstition." Perhaps you have yourself been thrown into the company of such scoffers, have had them to "poke fun" at you, have heard them make sport of your holy religion and of the sacred name of your God and Savior. Now what did you do under these circumstances? Did you stand up for your faith? Did you vindicate your Savior in holy indignation? Or did you act the wretched part of a moral coward? Did you allow them to ride rough-shod over your church and your religion? Did you let them besmirch the glorious name of your Savior without defending Him? Did you, perhaps, even join in the peals of laughter that greeted their vile effusions?—Or let me ask you another question: When you heard men curse by the name of your God—as no doubt has been the case quite often—did you reprove them for it? Or were you like a dumb dog that fails to open his mouth? Did you confess or deny Christ before men?

Again, we must also confess Christ with our mouth before our fellow Christians. Yes, we Christians should not be so backward about talking to one another concerning religious matters as we usually are. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." If our hearts are really glowing with the love of God and our Savior, why, then we cannot help speaking about it to one another. When

we visit among ourselves, must we forever be talking about farming, and business, and politics, and town or country gossip? Can we never find time to speak about church matters and religious questions? Are we even ashamed, perhaps, to talk of these things to our brethren in the faith? In particular, my brethren, are we ashamed or afraid to confess Christ before weak and erring brethren? Do we never pluck up courage to warn and admonish a brother when we see him going wrong? Do we never try to lead him back to the Savior? Do we leave all this to the pastor and the church council? Let us remember, friends, that this is also a way of confessing Christ before men!

And, finally, we ought to confess Christ with our mouth also before the members of our own family. Husband and wife should confess Christ before each other by conversing on religious topics, by exhorting each other lovingly and tenderly, when one or the other has made a misstep and failed out of weakness. Parents should confess Christ before their children by telling them of Christ, by praying with them and teaching them to pray, by reproving them for wrong-doing with the Word of God—ah! that all parents could learn to keep the Bible and the rod together!—thus leading them by word and example on to the path of life.—And the whole family should confess Christ by praying together at table, by holding family worship, whether they be alone or whether there are strangers in the house. All these are ways of confessing Christ before men.

## II.

Now why should we thus confess Christ before men, both with our lives and deeds and by the words of our mouth? The reason is evident from our text: Christ desires that we thus confess Him, and He promises that, if we do confess Him, He will also confess us before His heavenly Father, whereas if we deny Him, He will likewise deny us before His heavenly Father.

There can be little doubt as to what is the meaning of these words of the Savior. Christ uses the future tense: He says that at some future time He will confess or deny us before His Father which is in heaven. To what time can He be referring but to the great day of judgment? Yes, on that awful day, when He will raise the dead and gather all the nations of the earth before His throne to pronounce the verdict upon them, then He will confess or deny us, then He will own or reject us according as we have confessed or denied Him before men here in this world. Then He will place those who have confessed Him here at His right side, and will say unto them: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom



prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Then He will acknowledge them as His own and receive them into the everlasting glory of His heavenly kingdom, where they shall rejoice forever and ever in His company and that of the holy angels. Oh, my friends, is it not worth while to confess Christ before men? Does it not pay to bear a little ridicule and scoffing and, perhaps, even persecution for Christ’s sake? Is it not worth a thousand times all the annoyances that a confession of Jesus may incur, to know that then He will confess us as His own before His heavenly Father and before the holy angels, yea, and before the wicked and all the devils? On whose side, do you suppose, the joy and the laughter will then be? Ah! how those will weep and mourn and lament who have here rejected and denied Him—for then He, in His turn, will deny them! Then He will reject them from before His face and cast them into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then He will say to them: “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” You rejected and denied me on earth, now I likewise reject you. I never knew you, depart from me, ye workers of iniquity! Oh, what a wail and lamentation will arise from that guilty throng at these stern words of the Judge! But it will be too late then: having denied Him here during the time of grace, they will then be forever denied and rejected by Him. Oh, that none of us may be among those whom the Savior will deny before His Father on that day! For a terrible lot will be theirs, to be forever cast out from before the face of God into everlasting darkness and never-ending torment.

Yes, my friends, it is a very serious matter whether we confess or deny our Savior before men. It involves our eternal destiny, upon it depends whether our future lot shall be eternal happiness or never-ending misery. And why is this? Why is it of such momentous consequence that we confess Christ before men? The answer has already been given in part: Faith of the heart and confession of the mouth are inseparably linked together. The presence or absence of confession demonstrates the presence or absence of faith. Can the fountain help bubbling over with pure, limpid water? Can the fire refrain from emitting light and heat in every direction? Just so little can the heart that is filled with the love of Christ avoid overflowing with the streams of this love; just so little can the heart that is glowing with the flame of love help sending out the rays of this love. To quote the passage again: “From the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” Where true faith dwells in the heart, there this faith must manifest itself externally. For the true faith of the heart, that faith by which man believeth unto righteousness, is

not a dead and lifeless thing, nay, it is a living principle that animates and permeates the whole being and life of a man. As little as a living man can help moving, speaking, and giving other signs of life, so little can a believer help confessing Christ by word and deed. When, therefore, you find a man who shows no signs of spiritual life, who does not hear the Word of God, does not go to church, does not pray, performs no works of charity, lives a godless life, does not confess Christ either by word or deed, there you may be certain that that man is not a true Christian, however much he may boast of being one. That is *the* reason why so much depends on confessing or denying Christ; it is the mark of spiritual life and spiritual death. That is why it is impossible to be saved without confessing Christ.

But there are other reasons outside of this chief one. We should, furthermore, confess Christ, because it is our sacred duty to do so. We owe it to Him, our gracious Lord and Savior, to confess Him before our fellow men. It behooves us thus to show our love and gratitude before others. For don't we owe Him a debt of love and gratitude that we will never be able to pay off? Did He not leave His Father's throne of eternal majesty and glory and come down into this sin-cursed world of ours? Did He not take upon Himself our sins with all the misery and penalty they entail? Did He not bear the punishment we had deserved, and rescue us from eternal misery and woe? And should we not love Him in return? Yea, and should we not thank Him for His love with heart and mouth and hands? Should we not also confess it before others what a debt of love and gratitude we owe Him? Suppose you had been in immediate danger of losing your life and a friend had risked his own life in order to save yours: would it not be base ingratitude in you, if you never, with one syllable, made mention of his love to any one else? if you never told other people that you owe your life to that man, or if you perhaps even denied it when asked about it by others? But oh, Jesus has done a thousand times more for you than any human friend could possibly do: He has rescued you, not from temporal, but from eternal death. And now you can go through life and never confess to others how much, how infinitely much you owe to Him? Surely, you cannot do that! Surely, you must tell others about the Savior who gave His life to save you from eternal misery, and opened again to you the gates of Paradise.

Again, it is necessary for us to confess Christ, for it is by our confession of His name that His kingdom is built here on earth. In His wonderful wisdom Christ has chosen us poor human beings to spread His Gospel and to lead men to Him, so that they may be eternally saved. He might have used other means to accomplish



this purpose. He might have sent His angels, of whom there are thousands upon thousands about His throne, ready to do His bidding—He might have sent them to preach the Gospel. But He chose to build His kingdom by the instrumentality of us poor, sinful human beings. We should, by confessing His name, by publicly preaching it and privately confessing it to others, help to lead sinners to the knowledge of the truth. Should we not be eager and zealous to perform this service for our Savior? Should we not do all in our power that His kingdom may be spread and extended from one end of the earth to the other? Should we not, in our little sphere and humble calling, joyfully confess His name by word and deed wherever an opportunity offers, so that those with whom we come in contact may be brought to know Christ and His glorious salvation? Surely, we owe it to our Savior thus to aid in spreading His kingdom as much as lies in our power.

And, finally, we owe this also to our fellow men. Are we not all of the same flesh and blood? Has not the same God created us? Has not Christ redeemed us all alike from sin and hell? And have we not all an immortal soul to save? Can you see sinners about you on every hand, my friends, walking on the way that leads to eternal destruction: can you see them approaching nearer and nearer to the precipice over which they must plunge into endless ruin, and can you stand by indifferently without stretching out your hand to save them, without even making an attempt to rescue them? Can you allow them, as far as you are concerned, to rush unrebuked into eternal damnation? Will you not, must you not speak to them, by word and deed, of the redeeming love of the Savior who shed His life's blood also for their rescue? Can you help confessing your Savior before your erring fellow men, in order that they may learn to see the error of their way and, if possible, be brought to repentance and thus be eternally saved? Surely, yes, you will, you must confess Christ also for the sake of your fellow men.

Come, then, Thou Spirit of the living God, come down and enter these cold hearts of ours, kindle them with the love of a Savior who died for us; open our mouths and move our tongues to confess His holy name, to tell a world lost in sin of the salvation which they can find in His wounds. Transform our lives, that they may be a living testimony for Him who lived and died that we might escape eternal death.

Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,  
With all Thy quickening powers.  
Come, shed abroad a Savior's love,  
And that shall kindle ours.

Amen.

G. L.

## Confessional Sermon on Ps. 32, 5.

These words of the Psalm are preceded by a statement in which David explains why he was so anxious to confess his transgressions unto the Lord, and why he rejoiced so much in the absolution, or forgiveness of sin, extended to him. David says, "*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.*" David experienced that the worst thing a man can do as to his sins is to screen them, to hide them before God, not to admit his guilt, to put forth all sorts of vain excuses, and to feign innocence, while the voice of his own conscience accuses him of sin. David suffered; he wept, he pined away under the burden that weighed upon his soul. But when he made a clean breast of it, and poured out his whole soul before the omniscient God, and confessed his transgressions unto the Lord, the burden was removed from him at once. He was assured of forgiveness, and with utmost joy he could exclaim, "*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven.*"

To this day people meet with David's experience. How wretched and miserable can sin make him who keeps silence, who guards his sin as a secret which shall by no means leak out, who sits down and broods over what he has done, and whose lips are as silent as the grave! Insanity and suicide are often caused by the consciousness of guilt. But as soon as a man has confessed his sin unto God and has received and believed the divine assurance that the Lord has put his sin away, and that his iniquity shall not be imputed to him, the burden which had been wearing out his life is removed and he is made free.—Now our text treats of both, confession and absolution, and these are the very subjects to be considered by those who prepare for the reception of the Lord's Supper. Let us briefly consider these two subjects with the aid of God's Holy Spirit, namely:

I. *Confession.*

II. *Absolution.*

I.

"*I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord.*" The first thing for a Christian to do when he makes ready to approach the Lord's Table is to say with David, "*I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord.*" There are enthusiasts who claim that the ideal Christian has no transgressions to confess and that he beholds no more sin upon himself. The reverse is true. Christians are sinners



as long as they are in the flesh, and the more they advance in the knowledge of the truth and in holiness of life, the more will they perceive their own sinfulness and detect shortcomings where others, perhaps, would not find the trace of a sin. My dear Christian friend, can you say in truth that you obey the Commandments of the Lord? that you love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself? that your thoughts are always chaste and pure? that your desires are always good? that no evil words cross your lips? that you need not be ashamed of any of your deeds? that all your actions may bear the light of day? Can you say in truth that you have not sinned in desires, thoughts, words, and deeds? Not one can answer in the affirmative. We must all admit that we are sinners. And to go to the root of the evil, we must own that we are sinners by nature, that we have brought sin with us when we were born into this life, that our whole human nature is corrupted and defiled, poisoned and polluted with sin. We must say with David, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me," and with Paul, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."

Now if we consider how gracious and merciful our God has been to us, how with patience and long-suffering He has borne with us for years, and how ill we have repaid Him for His loving-kindness, how time and again we have fallen in sin and added transgression to transgression, should we not feel truly ashamed of ourselves? Should not our hearts be filled with sorrow and genuine remorse because we are such persistent damnable sinners? Should we not fear that the Lord will turn against us in His wrath, and that His mercy with us will come to an abrupt end? Should we not be aware of the fact that He is a consuming fire to evildoers, a God with whom no evil shall dwell, and that the soul that sinneth shall die? And what do we gain if we try to hide our sins from God? Can we hide them from His face? Is He not everywhere? If not a soul saw what you did, was not God standing at your side to witness the evil deed? Does not His searching eye pierce your very heart and behold your secret thoughts?

Let us confess our transgressions, then, unto the Lord. Let us confess them with true sorrow and remorse and say with the Prodigal Son, "Father, I have sinned in heaven and before Thee." Let us bow upon our knees in true repentance and confide to our heavenly Father all those things which weigh upon our soul. Let us humble ourselves before our God as truly penitent sinners, "for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

## II.

Our confession will be followed by the absolution, so that with David we can joyfully exclaim, "*And Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.*"

Full forgiveness is assured to us in the Gospel. The Gospel tells us that God had His beloved Son Jesus Christ take upon Himself the entire guilt of our sin and suffer for us the punishment which we have deserved for our transgressions. The Gospel informs us that God has already forgiven us all our sins for the sake of His own dear Son who was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification. The Gospel is a universal pardon, a general absolution from sin extended to the whole sinful world; and he who simply believes the words of the Gospel has the full forgiveness of all his sins.

What an easy thing, then, to be relieved of the guilt of your sin and to obtain forgiveness! God does not demand of you that you should prove yourself worthy of His forgiveness, that you should weep many tears of repentance and be extremely sorry, that you should pray and cry to Him from the depth of your soul, or that you should perform certain good deeds before He can forgive you. No; as you stand before Him in your wretchedness, conscious of guilt, without any merit or worthiness on your part, He addresses you and says, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool," and, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." And all that you are required to do, though your sins should be as black as night and as multitudinous as the sand on the seashore, is to receive the pardon which your God extends to you, to believe and in no wise to doubt that the Savior Jesus has blotted out all your transgressions as a thick cloud, and that all your sins are truly forgiven.

But we are so slow of heart to believe, and to convince us, to make us absolutely sure and certain that our sins are truly forgiven, God has ordained that the words of absolution should be addressed to the individual sinners who come to Him and confess unto Him their transgressions. When Jesus breathed on His disciples and said unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them," He thereby gave to His Church on earth the power to forgive sins. This power is vested in every local Christian congregation and is exercised in behalf of the congregation and in Christ's stead by the called ministers of Christ to whom Jesus distinctly says, "He that heareth you heareth me." Should not a thrill of joy pass through you, then, as in the absolu-



tion you hear the blessed words addressed to you, "I forgive you your sins"? Could God do more to convince you that your sins are truly forgiven than to have the fact of your forgiveness authoritatively declared unto you by His servant who is as much a sinner as you are, but, at the same time, an ambassador of the Lord, and who speaks not for himself, but in the Lord's name and by Christ's command? Should you not accept this declaration of the minister of Christ as a direct message to you from God, and in no wise doubt, but firmly believe that thereby your sins are forgiven before God in heaven, as if Christ, our dear Lord, dealt with you Himself?

Let us receive the absolution, then, with a truly believing heart and we shall be duly prepared for the reception of the Lord's Supper and obtain all the blessings of this holy Sacrament. Our faith will be strengthened, our hope revived, our charity increased. We shall be enabled to mend our sinful lives with the aid of God's Holy Spirit, to bear our crosses more submissively, to labor in our calling more faithfully, to pray more fervently, and, in general, to walk in this life as God's dear children. May He grant us these blessings for the sake of His mercy. Amen.

H. S.

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## Outlines for Sermons on the Gospel-Lessons.

### Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.

MATT. 22, 15—23.

"Render unto Caesar," etc. In these words our Lord explains our duties toward the worldly rulers and toward God. Our duty toward the State is that we render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, that is, that we be subject to our worldly rulers, abide by the existing laws, conscientiously pay the taxes, seek the welfare of the land, and, in general, be good citizens. For Christ obviously does not mean to say that a monarchy with a Caesar, or emperor, at the head is the only correct form of government, but He mentions Caesar because at that time and in that land Caesar was the ruler. No matter what the form of government may be, we are always bound to St. Paul's exhortation Rom. 13, 1—4. — Our duty toward God is that we render unto Him the things that are His. His is our heart, Prov. 23, 26. The things which we must render unto God are our love, our obedience, our service.

Christ's words, however, at the same time, involve an important principle. He most pointedly distinguishes between Caesar and God, earthly government and God's kingdom, Church and State. These two should never be intermingled and confounded. How we should

thank God that this principle, the strict separation of Church and State, is one of the fundamental pillars of our national Constitution, and how zealously we should guard against any infringement upon this divine principle in our land!

We shall, however, apply our attention to other points in the Gospel, and especially to the detestable methods which the Pharisees pursued that they might entangle Jesus in His talk.

### FLATTERY AND TRICKERY—DETESTABLE SINS.

- I. *Flattery a sin against the Eighth Commandment.*
- II. *Trickery a sin against the Fifth Commandment.*

#### I.

a. The flattery of the Pharisees, vv. 15. 16. They praise Jesus in the highest terms, but not a word do they mean of what they say. They do not exaggerate things; they speak no more than the truth in every syllable. "*Master.*" Was not Jesus a Master in Israel? "*Thou teachest the way of God in truth.*" Did not Jesus teach the only way to salvation? John 14, 6. "*Thou carest not for any man,*" etc. Did not Jesus always fearlessly express His convictions? How scathingly did He reprove the Pharisees and others for their wrongs!—But true as were their words, they came from a false heart and from treacherous lips. It was all flattery with them, and not a word of it did they mean.

b. Flattery a detestable sin. *a.* It is hypocrisy, v. 18. The flatterer is a pretender, a simulator. There is praise upon his lips and malice in his heart. Italian proverb: "He who caresses thee more than he is wont either deceives thee or is about to deceive thee." *β.* It is wickedness, v. 18, therefore sin, and a sin against the Eighth Commandment. You are deceitfully belying your neighbor if you praise him to his face, while you do not mean a word of it, but have some secret object in view, either to effect his ruin or to gain some advantage over him. How common is this sin! Who can tell the havoc which is caused in the world on the part of those who drink in the beguiling words of false friends, and become vain and proud, or find afterwards how shamefully they were deceived! Let us guard against this sin of flattery, of approaching the neighbor in a friendly disguise and meaning ill with him. Speak to the neighbor in a straightforward way, whether you mention to him his faults or his virtues.

#### II.

a. The trickery of the Pharisees. We are expressly told that they took counsel how they might entangle Him in His talk. Revenge was in their hearts because Jesus had quoted against them



Ps. 118, 22. Their object was to ensnare Him, to entangle Him in a burning political question, v. 17. To make it appear as if they meant no harm, as if sincerely they wished to be enlightened upon the question, they sent a committee composed of two classes of men who bitterly hated each other and disagreed on the question. The Pharisees opposed and the Herodians favored the tribute. Christ would have been caught in the trap either way, whether He had answered *yes* or *no*. It was trickery of the worst kind, intended to injure and harm the Lord either the one way or the other.

b. Trickery is a detestable sin. It is wickedness, v. 18, and is a sin against the Fifth Commandment. Do you not injure and harm the neighbor in his body, if you scheme against him, plot against him, that he might ruin his reputation, lose his earthly goods, or come to grief in some other way? Does not such trickery worry the life out of him and shorten his days? Who can count the murders caused by diabolical trickery in business or in the social world, by dastardly intrigues! Let us beware of this detestable sin and always deal openly and squarely with others, as we would have them deal with us.

Do you find yourself guilty of either of these sins? Seek refuge with the Savior Jesus. Do not sink into despair. There is forgiveness in the wounds of your crucified Redeemer, and He will endow you with strength to fight against these sins and to overcome them. 1 John 1, 7. Prov. 28, 13.

H. S.

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## Sermon Outline on John 8, 31. 32.

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These important words form part of a conversation between our dear Lord and the Jews, in which the wicked Jews were endeavoring to ensnare Him. In His wisdom the Lord so effectually rebutted the venomous charges of the Jews, and defended Himself so masterly, that many of the Jews now "believed on Him." But either seeing them to be insincere, or not likely to continue in His Word because of the great and many difficulties with which they would have to struggle, the kind Savior observed, "Then are ye my disciples indeed, if ye continue in my Word," etc. In these all-important words our dear Lord, "the Truth," describes both the character and the advantages of His disciples. Consider:—

### A TRUE DISCIPLE OF CHRIST.

Mark: I. *His true character.*

a. In the first place, Christ says, "If ye continue in my Word, then," etc. By Christ's Word we understand the Bible from Genesis

to Revelation, the Law and the Gospel. John 10, 27; 8, 47; — 17, 8. 22; 14, 24b. — Rev. 22, 18. 19.

b. In the second place, Christ says, "If ye continue in *my* Word, then," etc. If you would be a true disciple of Christ, you must continue in Christ's Word. Not in the word and wisdom of man; not in the word of Luther; not in the word of the Roman pope, 1 Tim. 4, 7, but in the Word of Christ, Matt. 23, 8. 10. Rom. 1, 16. The Word of Christ, inasmuch as Christ is its author, its substance, its end. (See *Hom. Mag.*, vol. 1, No. 4, p. 63.)

c. In the third place, Christ says, "If ye *continue* in my Word, then," etc. Christ does not say, "If ye read, hear, learn my Word;" but He says, "If ye continue in my Word," then ye are truly my disciples. 1. What is it to continue in the Word of Christ? Col. 1, 23. Matt. 24, 13. Acts 13, 43; 14, 22. 2. How can this be done? 2 Cor. 3, 5. John 15, 5. Phil. 2, 13. Patient continuance in Christ's Word is the only sure evidence of true discipleship, Luke 11, 28.

## II. *His blessed advantages.*

a. "Ye shall know the truth." 1. The truth. This does not refer to Christ, but to His Word, which He expressly calls the truth, John 17, 17; 1, 17. James 5, 19. John 18, 37. 2. To know the truth: increase in knowledge, 1 Pet. 2, 2. John 7, 17; 16, 13. Ps. 25, 5. 8. 9.

b. "And the truth shall make you free." 1. Christ is not speaking of worldly freedom or liberty. He is not speaking of freedom from foreign dominion, of a free constitution, free trade, a free press, civil liberty, etc. 2. Christ is here speaking of spiritual freedom, freedom from the guilt, power, burden, and dominion of sin. True Christians are free from the guilt and consequences of sin by the blood of Christ. Sin, death, and the devil have no longer dominion over them. Such is the blessed privilege of every true Christian. By nature all are the slaves of Satan and sin, Eph. 2, 3. From this bondage the truth alone can release us. LUTHER: "This is the freedom of the true disciples of Christ, who know the truth and continue therein, that they shall be free and secure from the devil, death, hell, and all evil. This is, indeed, a freedom worthy of the name, to be safe and certain of eternal salvation, and to have a good, cheerful conscience here and hereafter."

Such is the blessed portion of all true disciples of Christ, who continue in His Word: they shall know the truth, and the truth shall make them free.

J. C. A.